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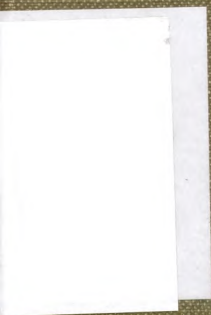
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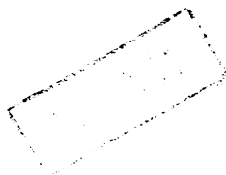
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## ECHOES FROM THE GNOSIS.

Under this general title is now being published a series of small volumes, drawn from, or based upon, the mystic, theosophic and gnostic writings of the ancients, so as to make more easily audible for the ever-widening circle of those who love such things, some echoes of the mystic experiences and initiatory lore of their spiritual ancestry. There are many who love the life of the spirit, and who long for the light of gnostic illumination, but who are not sufficiently equipped to study the writings of the ancients at first hand, or to follow unaided the labours of scholars. These little volumes are therefore intended to serve as introduction to the study of the more difficult literature of the subject; and it is hoped that at the same time they may become for some, who have as yet not even heard of the Gnosis, stepping-stones to higher things.

G. R. S. M.

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VOL. IX. THE CHALDÆAN ORACLES, II.  
VOL. X. THE HYMN OF THE ROBE  
OF GLORY.  
VOL. XI. THE WEDDING-SONG OF  
WISDOM

# THE WEDDING-SONG OF WISDOM.

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## THE WEDDING-SONG OF WISDOM.

### PREAMBLE.

The Hymn which forms the subject of this little volume has no traditional title. Like *The Hymn of the Robe of Glory*, which formed the last of these *Echoes*, it is found in the Syriac *Acts of Judas Thomas*, where it is put in the mouth of the Apostle who is said, on his travels, to have been guest of honour at a bridal feast.

In addition to the Syriac we have a Greek text which is plainly a translation. The Greek is in prose, but the Syriac for the most part in verses of twelve syllables, in couplets, just like *The Hymn of the Robe of Glory*. As Macke tells us (p. 17), where the Greek and Syriac agree the

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verses are of six syllables ; or more correctly, as Burkitt has pointed out (p. 277), normally 6+6, but sometimes 5+7. Moreover, the Greek can be translated back into metred Syriac where the present Syriac departs from the metre.

An Armenian version also existed, of which, unfortunately, we now possess only the opening and closing lines.

All scholars agree that the original Hymn was composed in Syriac ; but is our Syriac text as it stands the original ? It plainly is not ; it has been "over-worked," as the Germans call it, by an editor, and that too, to serve certain theological interests, while the scraps of the Armenian version show that it in its turn had been still further over-worked.

The first thing that strikes the careful reader is that where the Greek differs most widely from the Syriac, there the Syriac has been "over-worked," for it is precisely in such places that the metre is broken. It is again precisely in these



passages that the Greek is strongly Gnostic, while the Syriac is as strongly Catholic.

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It is therefore to be concluded, with all reasonable certainty, that the Greek preserves the original Syriac more closely, and that this original Syriac was the composition of a Gnostic poet.

As to this, there has been an unbroken *consensus* of opinion from Thilo (*Acta Thomæ*, p. 121 ff.) onwards; but lately (1905), Professor Burkitt has put forward another view. He first of all remarks (p. 270), that the contents and styles of the two Hymns, the Bridal Song and the Hymn of the Robe, are so different that they must be treated entirely apart from one another; and with this I am quite disposed to agree. Dr. Burkitt, however, goes on to say (p. 278): "I venture to think that the Bridal Ode is an integral part of the Acts of Thomas, and that it was composed for the very position which it now occupies," and further to contend that it is not a Gnostic Hymn, but quite

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in keeping with the early "orthodoxy" of the Syriac Church.

Professor Burkitt would himself admit that his belief (p. 282), that the "theology of the Hymn would pass as orthodox when judged by the standard of the early Syriac-speaking Church," is difficult of proof, unless we allow that that "orthodoxy" is referable to a time when "Gnostic" and "Catholic" were still intermingled.

His main contention is that "Gnosticism" is "intellectual" and not "moral," and that the whole atmosphere of the Thomas-Acts is the latter and not the former. Preuschen strongly argues the contrary, and shows that the main pre-occupation of the Gnostics was the scheme of moral salvation and not an intellectual science, and with this I fully agree; for the whole of the Gnosis appears to me to have been of the nature of a vital realization mystically conceived, operated chiefly by a moral conversion or regeneration, and not a rational system

of knowledge of the nature of a science ; and I do not see how the Gnosis can possibly be understood on any but the former hypothesis.

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Among the apocryphal religious romances *The Acts of Thomas* have hitherto been regarded as strongly tinctured with Gnosticism. *The Acts of Thomas* were, I hold, originally Gnostic ; but have since passed through the hands of Catholic editors. The general state of affairs concerning the Gnostic Acts-romances may be seen in the Preamble to Vol. IV. of these little books, *The Hymn of Jesus* ; and I will here requote what Lipsius, whose authority on the subject is great, has said :

“Almost every fresh editor of such narratives, using that freedom which all antiquity was wont to allow itself in dealing with literary monuments, would recast the materials which lay before him, excluding whatever might not suit his theological point of view—dogmatic statements, for example, speeches,

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prayers [hymns we might add], etc., for which he would substitute other formulæ of his own composition, and further expanding and abridging after his own pleasure, or as the immediate object which he had in view might dictate. . . .

“Catholic bishops and teachers knew not how better to stem this flood of Gnostic writings and their influence among the faithful, than by boldly adopting the most popular narratives from the heretical books, and, *after carefully eliminating the poison of false doctrine*, replacing them in this purified form in the hands of the public.”

With the general criticism of the extant forms of the text of *The Acts of Thomas* we cannot concern ourselves in this little treatise, but as against Professor Burkitt's view of our Hymn—which he himself has characterised as “rather extreme”—I venture to associate myself with the otherwise unanimous body of learned opinion, that the Hymn was originally from the pen of a Gnostic poet. Not

only so, but it may be contended that the whole of the *Acta Thomæ* were originally Gnostic. Did the original compiler, then, write the Hymn, or did he incorporate it from some other source? I am inclined to adopt the latter hypothesis, though I grant it is open to objection. But in any case, according to what has been said above, it was originally Gnostic rather than what subsequently became Catholic, and some later Catholic hand has "carefully eliminated" from the original Syriac "the poison of false doctrine,"—to quote the phrase of Lipsius which I have italicized—while the Greek translator has more or less faithfully followed his original. When, for instance, we find such a phrase as "the Son's Twelve Apostles" (p. 14), we agree with Macke (p. 9), that: "*Der alte gnostische Text ist katholisch überarbeitet*" (The original Gnostic text has been worked over in a Catholic sense).

In brief, the later Syrian redactor has "cooked" the text to suit his orthodoxy ;

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whereas the Greek translator, though not very skilful, is trustworthy (see Preuschen, p. 8). The Greek form is nearest the original ; still it is not pure, for it has additions and exclusions, while in places it is somewhat paraphrastic (*ibid.* p. 28).

If then the Hymn was incorporated by the Syrian compiler of the Acts from some other source, was it taken over just as it stood? That is to say, Was it originally composed as a Gnostic Hymn? I think it was ; and if it be suggested, as it has been by early critical opinion, that it was originally a profane Syrian Bridal Ode, and that it was subsequently Gnosticized, this two-stage hypothesis seems unnecessary if we admit, with Preuschen (pp. 7 and 29), the simpler probability that it was built on the model of similar Syrian wedding-songs and customs, even as they obtain to-day, during the seven days festivities, when the bride and bridegroom are represented as a royal couple.

And now what shall we call our Ode, for it has no title? On the whole I think that "The Wedding-Song of Wisdom" is a good description, if we take "of Wisdom" to signify "in praise of Wisdom," where Wisdom stands for the Gnostic Sophia, the purified human soul, awaiting the coming of her Divine Spouse and Complement the Christ. That this is a legitimate title may be seen from the Hymn itself, which in the Greek ends with the couplet:

"So with the Living Spirit they sang praise and hymn unto Truth's Father and to Wisdom's Mother."

This plainly stood in the lost Syriac original, for which in the present text the redactor or over-worker has substituted an orthodox doxology from some liturgy, beginning:

"Praise ye the Father, the Lord."

As to the contents and style of this Song, it must be confessed that we have to do with a poem of far less originality than the Hymn of the Robe of Glory, and

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I have taken it as a subject not so much for its intrinsic merits, as because it affords an opportunity to set forth some information on that great mystery which was in antiquity generally known as the Sacred Marriage.

With these brief introductory remarks the reader may perhaps approach the perusal of the translation of the Greek, Syriac and Armenian with greater understanding. For the Syriac I have compared all the existing versions, and for the Armenian fragments I have translated from the German the version printed by Preuschen.



## TRANSLATIONS.

### FROM THE GREEK VERSION.

*The Maiden is Light's Daughter ;* I  
*On her the Kings' Radiance resteth.*

*Stately her Look and delightsome,*  
*With radiant beauty forth-shining.*

*Like unto spring-flowers are her Garments,* 5  
*From them streameth scent of sweet odour.*

*On the Crown of her Head the King*  
*throneth,*  
*[With Living Food] feeding those 'neath*  
*Him.*

*Truth on her Head doth repose,*  
*She sendeth forth Joy from her Feet.* 10

*Her Mouth is opened, and meetly ;  
Two-and-thirty are they who sing praises.*

\* \* \* \* \*  
\* \* \* \* \*

- 15 *Her Tongue is like the Door-hanging  
Set in motion by those who enter.*

*Step-wise her Neck riseth—a Stairway  
The first of all Builders hath builded.*

- The Two Palms of her Hands*  
20 *Suggest the Choir of the Æons.*

*Her Fingers are secretly setting  
The Gates of the City ajar.*

*Her Bridechamber shineth with Light,  
Forth-pouring scent of balsam and sweet-  
herbs,*

- 25 *Exhaling the sweet perfume both of myrrh  
and savoury plants,  
And crowds of scented flowers.*

*Inside 'tis strewn with myrtle-boughs ;  
Its Folding-doors are beautified with reeds.*

*Her Bridesmen are grouped round her,        30  
Seven in number, whom she hath invited.*

*Her Bridesmaids, too, are Seven,  
Who lead the Dance before her.*

*And Twelve are her Servants before her,  
Their gaze looking out for the Bridegroom ;        35  
That at His sight they may be filled with  
Light.*

*And then for ever more shall they be with Him  
In that eternal everlasting Joy ;*

*And share in that eternal Wedding-feast,  
At which the Great Ones [all] assemble ;        40*

*And so abide in that Delight  
Of which the Ever-living are deemed worthy.*

*With Kingly Clothes shall they be clad,  
And put on Robes of Light.*

- 45 *And both shall be in Joy and Exultation  
and praise the Father of the Wholes,  
Whose Light magnificent they have received.*

*For at their Master's sight they were now  
filled with Light ;*

*They tasted of His Living Food  
That hath no waste at all,*

- 50 *And drank of that [eternal] Wine  
That causes thirst and longing never more.*

*[So] with the Living Spirit they sang  
praise and hymn  
Unto Truth's Father and to Wisdom's  
Mother*

**FROM THE CATHOLICIZED  
SYRIAC TEXT.**

- I *My Bride is a Daughter of Light ;  
Of the Kings' she possesseth the Splendour.*

*Stately and charming her Aspect,  
Fair, with pure beauty adorned.*

*Her Robes are like unto blossoms,* 5  
*Whose scent is fragrant and pleasant.*

*On the Crown of her Head the King throneth,*  
*Giving Food to her Pillars beneath Him.*

*She setteth Truth on her Head,*  
*Joy eddieth forth from her Feet.* 10

*Her Mouth is open—and well doth it suit*  
*her—*  
*For she singeth with it loud praises.*

*In her the Son's Twelve Apostles*  
*And the Seventy-two are all-thunderous.*

*Her Tongue's the Hanging of the Door,* 15  
*The Priest uplifts and enters.*

*A Stairway is her Neck*  
*That the first Builder hath builded.*

*The Palms of her Hands, furthermore,*  
*Predict the Land of the Living.* 20

*And of her fingers the Decad  
Set for her open the Heaven's Door.*

*Her Bridal Chamber's a-light,  
And filled with the scent of Salvation.*

- 25 *Incense is set in her Midst, of Love,  
and of Faith,  
And of Hope, and making all scented.*

*Within is Truth strewn ;  
Its Doors with Verity are decked.*

- 30 *Her Bridesmen surround her,  
All, whom she hath invited.*

*And her Bridesmaids, grouped with them,  
Are singing the Praise-hymn before her.*


- 35 *Before her there serve Living Ones,  
And watch for the Bridegroom's coming.*

*That by His Radiance they may be filled  
with Light,*

*And with him enter in His Kingdom,  
That never more shall pass away,*

*And go unto that Feast  
Where all the Righteous shall assemble ; 40*

*And so attain to that Delight  
Wherein they each and all shall enter.*

*Thereon they clothe themselves in Robes of  
Light,   
And are wrapped in the Radiance of their  
Lord,*

*And to the Living Father praises sing, 45  
In that they have received the Light mag-  
nificent,*

*And by their Lord's Resplendence are made  
Light,*

*And they have tasted of His Living Food  
That never more hath waste,*

*And of the Living [Water] they have drunk, 50  
That suffers them to pant and thirst no more.*

*Praise ye the Father, the Lord,  
And [praise ye] the Son Sole-begotten,  
And thanks give unto the Spirit  
As [thanks giving] unto His Wisdom.*

FROM THE LATER ARMENIAN VERSION.  
TWO FRAGMENTS.

*Great is the Light's Daughter, the Church ;  
She is the Desire of thy Kings, longed for  
and happy.*

\* \* \* \* \*  
\* \* \* \* \*

*We shall go to the Heavenly Marriage  
And drink the Wine that makes glad some ;*

*We shall [then] be with Him for ever,  
From the Bounds of the East bearing  
witness.*

The Scribe has unfortunately copied only the first and last lines, and omitted the whole body of the Hymn.



## COMMENTS.

### SYRIAN WEDDING-FESTIVITIES.

The picture that the Hymn conjures up before our eyes is entirely in keeping with the Syrian marriage customs observed among the peasants even to the present day. Cheyne, in his article on "Canticles," in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, summarizes from Wetzstein's instructive account ("D. syr. Dreschtafel," in Bastian's *Zt. für Ethnologie* (1873), pp. 287-294) of the customs of the Syrian peasants in the month of weddings (March).

"During the seven days after a wedding high festivity, with scarcely interrupted singing and dancing, prevails. The bridegroom and the bride play the parts of king and queen (hence the week is called the 'king's week'), and receive the

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homage of their neighbours ; the crown, however, is . . . . confined to the bride. The bridegroom has his train of 'companions.' . . . . The bride, too, has her friends, the maidens of the place, who take an important part in the reception of the bridegroom."

Before the wedding a song called *wasf* (*i.e.*, "laudatory description") is sung in honour of the bride. Other songs are also sung before and after the wedding.

### THE SONG OF SONGS.

The most famous ancient collection of such songs is *The Song of Songs* (*Shir ha-Shirim*), which the most recent research (see Cheyne, *ibid.*), characterizes as "an anthology of songs used at marriage festivals in or near Jerusalem, revised and loosely connected by an editor without regard to temporal sequence." Hirsch and Toy's article "Song of Songs," in the *Jewish Encyclopædia*, gives the date of compilation as probably in the

period 200-100 B.C., but it of course contains more ancient material.

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The following lines from a *wasf* in this collection, in their Revised Version, may with advantage be compared with our Ode :

“How beautiful are thy feet in sandals,  
O prince's daughter !  
Thy rounded thighs are like jewels,  
The work of the hands of a cunning  
workman.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thy neck is like the tower of ivory ;

\* \* \* \* \*

Thine head upon thee is like Carmel,  
And the hair of thine head like purple ;  
The king is held captive in the tresses  
thereof.”

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We might almost be persuaded that these very lines were in the mind of our Gnostic poet when he wrote his Ode ; but as the *wasf* was invariably in praise of the personal attractions of the bride, describing her charms with the intimacy of unabashed realism, such songs must have been very similar to one another, and must have become in time quite conventionalized. We need not, therefore, in seeking for the prototype of our Ode, be sure we have found it in this particular *wasf* of the *Song of Songs* collection.

Though these songs were originally secular, once they were collected as "scripture," and doubtlessly "over-written" in the interests of religion, they were regarded as portraying the phases of spiritual and not earthly love. They were thus made susceptible of an allegorical interpretation, and perhaps such interpretations were attempted almost as soon as they were thus collected, indeed the very collection of them may have been for this very

purpose. They were then regarded as setting forth the Love of Yahweh and His people, Israel. Of any such interpretations prior to the Christian era we have no definite knowledge, but similar interpretations were general enough among the Jewish mystics in the days of Philo (B.C. 30—A.D. 40), and must have been attempted long before his time, as we are justified in concluding from his statements about the allegorizing art of the Therapists. Both Midrash and Targum prove conclusively that the oldest interpretation of *The Song of Songs* was allegorical. It, therefore, follows that the allied schools of the Christianized Gnosis must have as fully delighted in allegorizing *Canticles*, and not only so, but have created new songs the better to express the innermost meaning of the great mystery of the Sacred Marriage, which was one of their chiefest sacraments. Later on this allegorizing passed into the Catholic Church. As *The Jewish Encyclopædia* article says: "The allegorical

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conception of it passed over into the Christian Church, and has been elaborated by a long line of workers from Origen down to the present time, the deeper meaning being assumed to be the relation between God or Jesus [the Christ rather] and the Church or the individual soul."

Whether or not *The Song of Songs* collection was originally intended to be allegorized, it is quite evident that our Ode was composed chiefly for this purpose; indeed, for the most part it interprets itself in technical Gnostic terms.

**THE SACRED MARRIAGE IN  
THE KABALAH.**

From the Talmud we know that R. Shimeon, son of Gamaliel, the teacher of Paul, interpreted *The Song of Songs* allegorically. R. Shimeon was one of the Tannaim of the "first generation," and flourished about the first quarter of the second century A.D. (See H. L. Strack, *Einleitung in den Thalmud*—Leipzig, 1900—p. 78).

It is not possible here to discuss the date and sources of the Zoharic documents which form the main *corpus* of the extant Kabbalah (*The Tradition par excellence*, according to the Jewish mystics); it is enough to say that these documents contain ancient material and traditions, which find their nearest relatives in the remains of the Jewish and Christian Gnosis. It will be sufficient for our present purpose to set down a passage from Jean de Pauly's recent French translation of the *Sepher-ha-Zohar* or *Book of Splendour*, the first complete translation which has ever appeared, and is now being published by the devotion of M. Émile Lafuma-Giraud (Paris, 1906, in progress). This passage purports to preserve the tradition of R. Shimeon's views on the Sacred Marriage, and runs as follows (i. 43 ff., *Zohar*, i. 8a):

“Rabbi Shimeon consecrated to the study of the mystic doctrine the whole night on which the Heavenly Bride is united with her Heavenly Spouse.”

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This is said to have been the eve of the Feast of Pentecost, the day when the Law (Torah) was revealed to the Israelites, and the Covenant (regarded as a marriage contract) contracted between Yahweh and His people.

“For, as it has been taught, all the Members of the Palace of the Heavenly Bride should spend the whole night with her, and on the morrow lead her beneath the wedding canopy, beside her Spouse, and rejoice with her. They should consecrate the eve of the Heavenly Marriage to the study of the Law, the Prophets and the Sacred Writings, to the interpretation of the verses and to the mysteries; for the esoteric science [*i.e.*, gnosis] is as it were the jewels of the Heavenly Bride.

“She and her young maidens, who surround her, rejoice the whole night; and on the morrow she goes beneath the wedding canopy surrounded by them, who are rightly called the ‘guests’ [*lit.* the invited] of the marriage.’



“The moment the Bride steps under the canopy, the Holy One (Blessed be He!) salutes the companions of the Bride, blesses them, and adorns them with crowns [or wreaths] woven by the Bride; happy the lot of the Bridesmaids!

“During the night when the Heavenly Marriage was being consummated, Rabbi Shimeon and his companions chanted hymns and uttered sayings containing new ideas about the mystic doctrine [the gnosis].

“Therefore, addressing his companions, Rabbi Shimeon exclaimed: ‘My sons, happy is your lot, for to-morrow the Heavenly Spouse will go beneath the canopy accompanied by you only, because you have rejoiced with her on the eve of the Marriage [or Union]. Ye all shall have your names written in the Heavenly Book; and the Holy One (Blessed be He!) will overwhelm you with sixty and six blessings, and adorn you with crowns of the world above.’”

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On this there follows a further interpretation; but enough has been said to indicate to the reader the striking similarities between the tradition of R. Shimeon b. Gamaliel and the matter of our Ode. With the writing of the name in the Book of Life may be compared *The Hymn of the Robe of Glory* (l. 47): "When thy Name is read in the Book of the Heroes," and the note upon it (p. 87). The number 66, is the double of 33, the full number of æons in the Christian Gnostic Plērōma or Fulness. The number of the Kabalistic Ways in the *Sepher Yetzira*, the oldest extant Kabalistic treatise (? VIIth—XIth centuries), is 32. This *Book of Perfecting* (see E. Bischoff, *Die Kabbalah: Einführung in die jüdische Mystik and Geheimwissenschaft*—Leipzig, 1903—pp. 8 and 10) is based upon the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet as the 22 "elements" of all things, and the 10 numbers of the decad (Sephiroth), as categories of all Being. These are all summed up in one absolute Unity, 33 in

all. Perhaps this may throw light on l. 12 of our Ode (Greek text):

“Two-and-thirty are they who sing praises.”

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#### IN THE WRITINGS OF PHILO JUDÆUS.

But already a century before Rabbi Shimeon, Philo of Alexandria was filled with the idea of the Mystic Union or Sacred Marriage; it was the favourite doctrine of his circle and of similar circles of allied mystics of the time. I have already at length (*H. i.* 216-224) set forth his doctrines on the subject, with full references to his works, and must here be content with a few quotations only, which embody the doctrine, apart from the scriptural references which he would have us take as the foundation on which the doctrine is built; whereas it is quite evident that the doctrines were shared in by many who had no knowledge of the Covenant-documents, and that it is Philo himself who accommodates the scripture of his race to the doctrines.

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Philo writes :

“ But it is not lawful for Virtues, in giving birth to their many perfections, to have part or lot in a mortal husband. And yet they will never bring forth of themselves without conceiving their offspring of another.”

“ Who, then, is He who soweth in them their glorious progeny, if not the Father of Wholes—the God beyond all genesis, who yet is Sire of everything that is ? For, for Himself, God doth create no single thing, in that He stands in need of naught ; but for the man who prays to have them He creates all things.”

And again :

“ God is both Home, the incorporeal Land of incorporeal ideas, and Father of all things, in that He did create them, and Husband of Wisdom, sowing for the race of mankind the seed of blessedness into good virgin soil.

“For it is fitting God should converse with an undefiled, an untouched and pure nature, with her who is in very truth *the* Virgin, in fashion very different from ours.

“For the congress of men for the procreation of children makes virgins wives. But when God begins to associate with the soul, He brings it to pass that she who was formerly wife becomes virgin again. For banishing the foreign and degenerate and non-virile desires, by which it was made womanish, He substitutes for them native and noble and pure virtues. . . .

“Wherefore is it not fitting that God, who is beyond all genesis and all change, should sow in us the ideal seeds of the immortal virgin virtues, and not those of the woman who changes the form of her virginity?”

Thus, speaking of the impure soul, Philo writes :

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“ For when she is a multitude of passions and filled with vices, her children swarming over her—pleasures, appetites, folly, intemperance, unrighteousness, injustice—she is weak and sick, and lies at death’s door, dying ; but when she becomes sterile, and ceases to bring them forth, or even casts them from her, forthwith, from the change, she becometh a chaste virgin, and receiving the Divine Seeds she fashions and engenders marvellous excellencies that nature prizeth highly—prudence, courage, temperance, justice, holiness, piety, and the rest of the virtues and good dispositions.”

So also speaking of the Therapeutrides, the women-disciples of the Therapeut communities, he writes :

“ Their longing is not for mortal children, but for a deathless progeny, which the soul that is in love with God can alone bring forth, when the Father

hath sown into it the spiritual Light-beams, by means of which it shall be able to contemplate the laws of Wisdom."

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And a little later he adds :

"And Wisdom, who, after the fashion of a mother, brings forth the self-taught Race, declares that God is the Sower of it."

And yet again, speaking of this spiritual progeny, he writes :

"But all the Servants of God (Therapeuts) who are lawfully begotten, shall fulfil the law of their nature, which commands them to be parents. For the men shall be fathers of many sons, and the women mothers of many children."

They shall be true Godfathers and Godmothers.

Still contemplating the mystery, though from another standpoint, he writes :

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“For some Wisdom judges entirely worthy of living with her, while others seem as yet too young to support such admirable and wise house-sharing; these latter she hath permitted to solemnize the preliminary initiatory rites of Marriage, holding out hopes of its future consummation.”

But, indeed, Philo is never weary of descanting on what he evidently regarded as the highest consummation of the holy life, the *raison d'être* of which he sets forth as follows :

“We should, accordingly, understand that the True Reason [*Logos* = *Ātman* in Sanskrit] of nature has the potency of both father and husband for different purposes—of a husband, when He casts the seed of virtues into the soul as into a good field; of a father, in that it is His nature to beget good counsels, and fair and virtuous deeds, and when He hath begotten them, He nourisheth them with



those refreshing doctrines which Discipline and Wisdom furnish.

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“And the Intelligence [*Buddhi* in Sanskrit] is likened at one time to a virgin, at another to a wife, or a widow, or one who has not yet a husband.

“It is likened to a virgin, when the Intelligence keeps itself chaste and uncorrupted from pleasures and appetites, and griefs and fears, the passions which assault it; and then the Father who begot it, assumes the leadership thereof.

“And when she (Intelligence) lives as a comely wife with comely Reason (*Logos*), that is with virtuous Reason, this self-same Reason Himself undertakes the care of her, sowing, like a husband, the most excellent concepts in her.

“But whenever the soul is bereft of her children of prudence, and her Marriage with Right Reason, widowed of her most fair possessions, and left desolate of wisdom, through choosing a blameworthy life—then, let her suffer the pains she hath decreed against herself, with no

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Wise Reason to play physician to her transgressions, either as husband and consort, or as father and begetter."

As examples of Philo's allegorizing art we may append two instances. Referring to Jacob's dream of the white and spotted and otherwise marked kine, Philo insists that it must be taken allegorically. The first class of souls, he says, are "white."

"The meaning is that when the Soul receives the Divine Seed, the first-born births are spotlessly white, like unto light of utmost purity, to radiance of the greatest brilliance, as though it were the shadowless ray of the sun's beams from a cloudless sky at noon."

Even the realistic primitive-culture story of Tamar does not dismay him, for he writes :

"For being a widow she was commanded to sit in the House of the Father,

the Saviour ; for whose sake for ever abandoning the congress and association with mortal things, she is bereft and widowed of all human pleasures, and receives the Divine quickening, and, full-filled with the Seeds of Virtue, conceives and is in travail with fair deeds. And when she brings them forth, she carries off the trophies from her adversaries, and is inscribed as Victor, receiving as a symbol the palm of victory."

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Every stage of this Divine conception or self-regeneration is but a shadow of the mystery of cosmic creation, which Philo sums up as follows :

"We shall . . . be quite correct in saying that the Maker who made all this universe, is also at the same time Father of what has been brought into existence ; while its Mother is the Wisdom of Him who hath made it—with whom God united, though not as man with woman, and implanted the power

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of Genesis. And she, receiving the Seed of God, brought forth with perfect labour His only beloved Son whom all may perceive—this cosmos.”

Did Philo in all this write all he knew ; or is he raising one veil of the mystery only ? Virtue is most admirable, the very foundation of the whole building, but virtues are also powers, and regeneration spells actual re-birth and perfecting on all planes, and in all states.

**IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.**

Before giving some indications of how the Gnostics regarded the mystery of the Sacred Marriage, we may set down a summary of what Paterson has to say from an orthodox Biblical standpoint, on “Marriage as a Symbol of Spiritual Truths,” in his article in Hastings’ *Dictionary of the Bible* (Edinburgh, 1900), whence all the references can be obtained.

The germ of the idea has been traced

by Robertson Smith to Semitic "heathenism" where the God was regarded as the husband of the motherland.

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After Hosea it became a commonplace of prophecy that Yahweh was to Israel as a Bridegroom and Israel to Yahweh as a Bride. This conception passed over into Christianity with modifications — the Bridegroom being now God in Christ, and the Bride the Church, the spiritual Israel chosen out of every nation.

"How large a portion of the body of Christian doctrine may be set forth, and with the sanction of Scripture, under the category of the marriage relation, may be briefly indicated :

"(I) Under *the doctrine of God* this representation . . . . lays special stress on the attributes of clemency and long-suffering, while it safeguards the holiness of God by showing Him grieved and provoked to anger by contumacy and unfaithfulness. [This is a very human point of view.—G.R.S.M.]. As husband God also provides for his people.

“(2) *The doctrine of sin* is, from this point of view, characterized as adultery—a designation which, as regards (a) *the nature of sin*, indicates that its essence consists in indifference or even hatred towards God, and the giving of the affections towards other objects; (b) *the heinousness of sin* draws attention to its aggravation as unfaithfulness to solemn obligations and ingratitude for high favours; and (c) *the punishment of sin* teaches that persistence in it entails a casting-off, of which human divorce is a pale emblem.”

The Jewish mystics had manifestly reached a higher ideal in Philo's time, and the Christian Gnostics followed on them.

“(3) In the Christological doctrine the points which are chiefly emphasized by the conception are the love of Christ, His kingly office as exercised in His headship over the Church, and His intimate union with it through the indwelling spirit.”

The key-passages are *I. Cor.* xi. 2 : **THE  
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“For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God : for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ.”

And the *Letter to the Ephesians*, v. 23-32 :

“For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the Head of the Church, being Himself the Saviour of the Body. . . . Even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it ; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it with the Laver of Water by the Word, that He might present the Church to Himself a glorious [Bride] not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing ; but that she should be holy and without blemish. . . . This mystery is great : but I speak in regard of Christ and the Church.”

The last words seem to mean that Paul,

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or (if it be preferred) whoever wrote the Letter, knew that the above was one interpretation only, and that there was another and more intimate revelation of the mystery, when the individual Soul gathered together the Church, or Assembly, of its scattered Members or Powers, as in the Osiric Mystery.

But to return to Paterson's by no means inspiring and clumsily worded exposition :

“(4) In close relation to the last, the doctrine of the Church is elucidated and enriched by the assertion of its mystical union with and dependence upon Christ, and of its essential note of sanctity—the latter, which includes all the graces included in sanctification, being beautifully portrayed as the bridal adornment.

“(5) Finally, as regards eschatology, the figure concentrates attention on the momentous event of the Second Coming, which is sudden as the coming of the bridegroom, and places in a clear light



the bliss, the security, and unutterable glory of the everlasting kingdom."

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It can hardly be said that the writer has made it clear that he regards the mystery, which Paul calls "great," as veiling an intense and immediate meaning independent of the Church as orthodoxly understood. The terms "symbol" and "figure" are clearly used rhetorically and not mystically, as it were things we have now outgrown. But to the mystic it is all far otherwise; the Second Coming is an eternal fact, perpetually happening; the Union is of like nature.

But before we can understand the Gnostic point of view some indications of the nature of Wisdom as the World-Soul and individual soul must be attempted.

#### **WISDOM.**

In all the ancient great religions the Power whereby the God brought Himself

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into manifestation was regarded as His Divine Spouse ; and so it is even to-day in Indian theosophy, every God has his Shakti or Power, every Deva his Devī. This was apparently (apart from Judaism) a common feature in all the ancient Semitic traditions, as may be seen in the Phœnician cosmogony preserved in the *Histories* of Philo Byblius (*H. i. 122 ff.*).

In Babylonian cosmogony the Spouse of the Supreme was Wisdom. Wisdom dwelt in the Depths of the Great Sea with Ea the Creative Deity. Ea is the Bēl-nimequi, the Lord of Unfathomable Wisdom ; *cmēqu*=to be deep, and to be wise. The Deep or Depth is, therefore, symbol of Unfathomable Wisdom ; compare *Apsū*=Waterdeep and House of Wisdom. (See Hehn, p. 2, in the work referred to later on, p. 88).

The post-exilic scriptures of the Hebrews (and pre-exilic for a matter of that) were strongly tinctured with Babylonian ideas, and a Wisdom-literature was gradually developed which later on became strongly

influenced by the "philosophizing" of Hellas. This Hokmah-literature (for references see Kohler's art. "Wisdom" in *The Jewish Encyclopædia*) was partly included in the later canon, but the major part of it, of which large portions have been lost, was apocryphal.

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In the now canonical literature Wisdom was regarded as "the all-encompassing Intelligence of God, the Helper of the Creator, the Foundation of the World.

"In exact proportion as Israel's God was believed to be the God of the universe, Wisdom was regarded as the Cosmic Power, God's Master-Workman [lit. Master-Workwoman] and His Designer, while at the same time Wisdom became the law of life and the Divine guide and ruler of man. . . .

"Under the influence of Greek philosophy Wisdom became a divine agency of a personal character, so that Philo terms it . . . the Mother of the Creative Word. . . .

"In Christian and Gentile Gnosticism

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Wisdom became the centre of speculation."

In the last sentence we would reverse the order, the doctrines were Gentile first of all and were later Christianized.

The orthodox Jews, with their fanaticism for the exclusive masculine, regarded Wisdom as a Constructive Formative Energy. The Gnostics regarded Her as a Conceptive, all-encompassing Power, that received and brought forth the Ideas of the Divine Mind, and manifested the Divine Laws.

In brief, Wisdom was the World-Soul for cosmos, and the individual soul for man ; and what specially interested the Gnostics, what indeed is the special interest of all mystics, was that the myth of the one was the myth of the other. To use Sanskrit terms, she is Mahā-buddhi, Great Buddhi, the World-Soul or Divine Instinct, and individual Buddhi in man. We will, therefore, turn to the doctrines of the Christianized Gnosis on this mystery.

Wisdom (Ḥokmah in Hebrew, Sophia in Greek, both feminine) dwelt with God before the Creation of the World, and sported continually before Him (*Proverbs*, viii.). Wisdom is the *Līlā* or Sport of Deity, His *Māyā* in Sanskrit, which does not mean Illusion, but rather Creative Power, from *mā*, to measure.

In the "Syrian Gnosis," perhaps the oldest form of the Christianized Gnosis, to Wisdom is assigned both the conception of the manifested worlds and the production of its Seven Ruling Powers (the Hebdomad). She herself was throned above them all, in the Place of the Midst (the Ogdoad), between the Spiritual World proper, that is the Divine Mind (the Plērōma or Fulness) and the Sensible World (the Kenōma or Emptiness, or Hysterēma or Insufficiency). The same idea is seen in *Proverbs*, ix. 1 (LXX.) :

"Wisdom hath built for herself a House and underpropped it with Seven Pillars."

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What these Seven may be we will enquire later on. They are referred to in "her Pillars beneath" of our Syriac Ode (l. 8).

That there was already a fully developed Gnosis among the Jewish Mystics when the Proverbs-collection was compiled, may be seen from the graphic description (viii. 2, LXX.) :

"Wisdom is on the lofty Heights ; she standeth in the Midst of the Paths ; for she sitteth by the Gates of the Mighty, and singeth Hymns at the Entrances."

The Gnostics knew that this referred to Sophia sitting in the Place of the Midst, above the Seven Fate-spheres, in the Eighth or Ogdoad, at the Gates of the Mighty, that is the Entrances of the Plērōma or Fulness, the Shekinah, to which the Paths of Return lead.

She is thus the Mediatrix between the Upper and the Lower, and brings forth the mundane appearances after the spiritual

prototypes. She is thus called Mother, and Mother of the Living. (All the references may be obtained from Lipsius' art. "Sophia," in Smith and Wace's *Dict. of Christ. Biog.*). She is also called Light-Mother or Shining Mother, and the Power Above; and from her all spiritual souls draw their origin.

But how is it that the Divine Spouse, in bringing the universe into manifestation, had herself apparently fallen from the Perfection, and stood between it and the Imperfection? There were many myths which speculated concerning this mystery, but as it would take several small volumes to set them forth in detail, we must content ourselves with a few brief indications only.

To quote from Lipsius (*loc. cit.*):

"The fate of the 'Mother' was regarded as the prototype of what is repeated in the history of all individual souls, which being of heavenly pneumatic [spiritual] origin, have fallen from the upper

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World of Light, their Home, and come under the sway of evil powers, from whom they must endure a long series of sufferings in transmigration till a Return to the Upper World be vouchsafed them. . .

“It was . . . . taught that the souls of the Pneumatici [Spiritual], having lost the remembrance of their heavenly derivation, required to become once more partakers of Gnosis, or knowledge of their own pneumatic essence [not intellectual but spiritual knowledge therefore], in order to make a Return to the Realm of Light. In the impartation of this Gnosis consists, according to the doctrine common to all Gnostics, the Redemption brought and vouchsafed by Christ to all pneumatic souls. But the various fortunes of all such souls were wont to be contemplated in those of this mythical personage Sophia, and so it was taught that the Sophia also needed Redemption wrought by Christ, by whom she is delivered from her [spiritual] ignorance and her passions, and will at the end



of the World's development [in the case of individual souls at the end of *their* development or evolution, that is when perfected] be brought back to her long-lost Home, the Upper Plērōma, into which this Mother will find an entrance along with all pneumatic souls, her children [in the case of the individual soul, her powers, that is the powers of her past lives which are worthy of immortality], and there, in the Heavenly Bridal Chamber, celebrate the Marriage Feast of Eternity."

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In the Gnostic systems mangled by Irenæus, "the cosmogonies of Syrian paganism have a preponderating influence."

In one of these we are told of the creation of man, whom the Sophia uses as a means to deprive the Opposing Powers of the Light they have stolen, "of the perpetual conflict on his Mother's part with the self-exalting efforts of the Archontes [the Rulers or Opposing Powers,

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without whom, however, there would be no manifestation], and of her continuous striving to recover again and again the Light-spark [Ātmic or Spiritual energy] hidden in human nature, till, at length, Christ [the Logos] comes to her assistance and, in answer to her prayers, proceeds to draw all the Sparks of Light to Himself, unites himself with Sophia as the Bridegroom with the Bride, descends on Jesus [purified man] who has been prepared, as a pure vessel for His reception, by Sophia [Jesus as the purified soul is also Sophia from another point of view], and leaves him again before the crucifixion [here meaning the death of the body], ascending with Sophia into the Æon that will never pass away."

One of the names given to Wisdom by the Gnostics was Prunicus (Προυνίκος) which is generally rendered the Lustful or Lewd, but which mystically refers to "her attempts to entice away again from the Cosmic Powers [the Powers

forth to procreation] the Seeds of Divine Light."

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She is called the Harlot, because she unites with the Light-sparks. Thus in the Simonian legend, Helen (Sophia), the consort of Simon (Shamash, the Sun, the Christ), is fabled to have been a harlot whom he picked up in a brothel at Tyre. This betrays a Phœnician background, and Tyre probably equates with the Jerusalem Below, and Egypt, the manifested world of physical nature.

The Sophia was further regarded as the World-Womb, and the symbolism worked out instructively for the mystic. This is the Jagad-yoni of the Hindus.

All these theories are ancient, and certainly did not derive from the "Wisdom" of the Old Testament ; it was rather the latter that was accommodated to them. We, therefore, agree with Lipsius when he writes :

" It is obvious that all these cosmogonic theories have their source or archetype

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*not* in the Sophia of the Old Testament, but in the Thalath or Moledet of Syrian paganism, the Life-Mother of whom Berossus has so much to relate, or in the World-Egg out of which when cloven asunder Heaven and Earth and all things proceed."

It is true that some very ancient wisdom was at the back of it all, whether originating with Thalath or not, and modern science entirely corroborates this ancient wide-spread mysticism; indeed it is difficult to find a symbolism that works out more naturally and satisfactorily.

Another name for Sophia used by the Greek-writing Gnostics was Achamōth, the transliteration of the Aramaic Ḥach-mūth (= Hebrew Ḥokmah). Another of her names, of which, however, the derivation is very uncertain, is Barbēlō, or Barbērō. In the *Pistis Sophia* (p. 361), Barbēlō is the Mother of the repentant or returning Sophia, the human soul.

If in one of her aspects she was called the Harlot, equally so was she called the Virgin and Virgin of Light.

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In the system of Bardaiṣān, Ḥachmūth gives birth to two daughters, probably typifying the twin soul of man, who are poetically called "Shame of the Dry Land" and "Image of the Waters," earthy and watery. We also hear of "the Maiden who, having sunk down from the upper Paradise, offers up prayers . . . for help from above, and being heard, returns to the joys of the Upper Paradise."

As the Mother of the twin daughters, Ḥachmūth is elsewhere called by Bardaiṣān the Holy Dove, that is the Divine Mother Bird, who lays and hatches both cosmic and human "Eggs." The two poetical names given to the daughters of Ḥachmūth, Wisdom (Buddhi), have hitherto proved an insoluble puzzle. The Mother, however, is always on the substance side of things, and therefore her daughters, as all daughters must be, are equally on the substance side. Now the

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"Image of the Waters," is also referred to as the "type of the watery body." The names may thus designate the cosmic prototypes of what in the individual are the subtle or watery vehicle, and the gross or physical vehicle.

That this is not so wild a speculation may be seen from the Hellenistic mystery-poem known as the *Chaldaean Oracles*, consisting of Chaldaean (that is, Syrian) stuff elaborately "philosophized." In them (ii. 37, 81, 83), the physical body is characterized as the "dung" (? = "shame") of gross matter (*hylē*). This *Hylē* or Gross Matter is not regarded as the Fruitful Substance of the Universe, the "Land flowing with Milk and Honey" (the Jerusalem Above, or Sophia, Mother of all living), but as the dry and squalid element beneath the Moon, which, Proclus tells us, is called in the Oracles, the "Unwatered," that is, which is in itself Unfruitful, the Desert as compared with the Promised Land.

Equally so as to "Image of the Waters"

we have information (ii, 57 f.). For we read :

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“Extend on every side the reins of Fire [Mind] to guide the unformed soul.”

That is to say, constrain the flowing watery nature of the soul by means of the Fire of the Spirit ; and this seems also to be the meaning of the difficult fragment :

“If thou extendest Fiery Mind to flowing work of piety, thou shalt preserve thy body too.”

This seems to mean that, when by means of purification the soul is made fluid—that is to say, is no longer bound to any configuration of external things, when it is freed from prejudice, or opinion, and personal passion and sentiment, and is “with pure purities now purified,” as the *Mithriac Ritual* (p. 20) has it—then is this regenerated soul and plasm, the

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germ of the "perfect body," ready for union with the true Mind of the Father.

Speaking of the *Acts of Thomas*, Lipsius writes, after mentioning *The Hymn of the Soul* :

"Of the other hymns which are preserved in the Greek version more faithfully than in the Syriac text which has undergone Catholic revision, the first deserving of notice is the *Ode to the Sophia*, which describes the marriage of the 'Maiden' with her Heavenly Bridegroom and her introduction into the Upper Realm of Light. This 'Maiden,' called 'Daughter of Light,' is not, as the Catholic reviser supposes, the Church, but Hachmūth (Sophia), over whose head the 'King,' *i.e.* the Father of the Living Ones [Light-sparks] sits enthroned ; her Bridegroom is, according to the most probable interpretation, the Son of the Living One, *i.e.* Christ. With her the Living Ones, *i.e.* pneumatic souls, enter into the



Plērōma, and receive the glorious Light of the Living Father, and praise along with the 'Living Spirit,' the 'Father of Truth' and the 'Mother of Wisdom.' ”

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Much more could be written on this fascinating subject, but enough has now been given for our immediate purpose.

#### THE SACRED MARRIAGE IN CHRISTIAN GNOSTICISM.

Sufficient has already been said to show that among the Christian Gnostics the mystery of the Sacred Marriage or Mystic Union formed the chiefest of their innermost sacraments. It would be too long to pursue the subject in detail and bring together all the passages from the "Fragments of a Forgotten Faith"—which we are pleased to see Preuschen (p. 7) refers to as "*Denkmäler eines verschollenen Glaubens*" (the title of the German translation of *Fragments* being *Fragmente eines verschollenen Glaubens*, Berlin, 1902)—but

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two of the most striking may be set down. The first has already been referred to in the above quotations from Lipsius, but it is worth while to give a full translation from the Old Latin version of Irenæus' lost Greek (I. xxx. 12). Irenæus ascribes the doctrine to those whom he calls Ophites, but who called themselves simply Gnostics, and whom Theodoret calls Sethians. This important passage comes at the end of the Church Father's exposition of what in its cosmogony is evidently a pre-Christian system—probably an ancient and very generally held belief outside Jewry, the main outlines of which have already been given in the comments on *The Hymn of the Robe of Glory*, under the heading "The Dual Sonship" (pp. 40 ff.). It runs as follows :

"And since she herself [Wisdom Below or in manifestation] had no rest either in heaven or on earth, in her distress she invoked the Mother [Wisdom Above] to her aid. Accordingly her Mother, the First Woman, had pity on the repentance

of her Daughter, and asked the First Man [the Father] that Christ [the Son] should be sent to help her.

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“So He emanated and descended to His own Sister, the Moistening of Light.”

That is, to the Light that had become watery or descended into the Watery Realms of Generation.

“And she, the Downward Sophia [that is the Wisdom tending downwards to matter], becoming conscious that her Brother was descending to her, both proclaimed His Coming through John, and made ready the Baptism of repentance, and adopted Jesus beforehand [that is, chose him as her Son]; so that the Christ descending might find a pure vessel. [The present reading of the rest of the sentence is hopeless.]

“He descended through the Seven Heavens, making Himself like to their Sons [that is, taking on the forms of their Rulers], and stage by stage emptied them of their Power [that is, the Light-sparks or Pneumatic souls that they had

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imprisoned]; for the whole Moistening of Light ran-together to Him.

“And the Christ descending into this World [of gross matter] first clothed Himself with His own Sister Sophia, and both were in bliss in mutual refreshment, the one with the other; this is the Bridegroom and the Bride.

“Now Jesus being [re-] generated from the Virgin by the energizing of God, was wiser and purer and more righteous than all men; [so] the Christ-blended-with-Sophia [two-in-one, male-female] descended on him, and he became Jesus-Christ.”

To this we may append the following section (§13) to give the reader some idea of one of the great Gnostic traditions concerning Jesus. Irenæus continues:

“They say that many of his Disciples were not conscious of the Descent of the Christ upon him; it was only when the Christ descended upon Jesus that he

began to manifest powers and heal and announce the [hitherto] unknown Father and confess openly that he was Son of the First Man.

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“At these things the Rulers and the Father of Jesus [that is, the Father of his body, the Demiurge or Former of the physical world, which they equated with the Jewish idea of God] grew angry and set to work to have him killed. The moment this was brought about the Christ - together-with - Wisdom departed into the Incorruptible Æon [Eternity], while it was the Jesus who suffered the death of crucifixion.

“Yet the Christ did not forget his [Beloved], but sent down from above a certain Power unto him, which raised him up in the body, in that body which they call both vital and spiritual; for he sent the mundane elements [of his physical body] back again into the world.

“The Disciples, however, though they saw he had risen did not know him [after death], nay, [they did not really know]

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even Jesus himself [in life], whose Grace [that is, the 'certain Power'] rose from the dead. They say that this very great error prevailed among the Disciples, that they believed he had risen in a mundane body."

All previous translations have missed the meaning of *Gratia* (Grace) in the last sentence but one, taking "*cujus gratia*" to mean "for whose sake" or "through whom." It is sufficient to refer the reader to *The Hymn of Jesus* (pp. 29, 32, 49, 52, 62, 64), to show that the lost Greek original of Irenæus must have read *Charis*, one of the synonyms of *Sophia* in one of her aspects. That which rose from the "dead" was the Power or incorruptible "Body" of Light, the "Perfect Body," or "Robe of Glory"—or of "Power."

Our Ode sets forth the perfections of the Bride adorned for the Bridegroom; but the mystery could be set forth from the complementary point of view as we

have already (p. 42) seen from Philo of Alexandria. In the Naassene Document, which so strikingly reveals to us the main moments in the evolution of one line of "Ophite" Gnostic tradition—(see *H. i.* pp. 139-198, "The Myth of Man in the Mysteries")—the early Hellenistic writer tell us :

"And the law is that after they have been initiated into the Little Mysteries [those of Generation], they should be further initiated into the Great [those of Regeneration]."

After describing the nature of the Lesser Mysteries, he adds :

"These are the Little Mysteries, and after men have been initiated into them, they should cease for a little, and become initiated in the Great."

Whereupon the early Jewish Gnostic comments :

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“For this Mystery is the Gate of Heaven, and this is the House of God, where the Good God dwells alone; into which House no impure man shall come—but it is kept under watch for the Spiritual alone;—where, when they come, they must cast away their garments, and all become Bridegrooms, obtaining their true Manhood through the Virginal Spirit.”  
(*H. i. 180, 181.*)

The Virginal Spirit is the Great Mother, the Sophia Above. This reminds us strongly of the primitive-culture initiatory rite of “young-man-making” as it is called; but that belongs to the most grossly realistic form of the Lesser Mysteries. What a marvellous transformation is wrought in passing from the Below to the Above, into the Greater Mysteries, which the later Christian Gnostic commentator rightly characterizes as Heavenly!

The Rite of the Sacred Marriage must have been dramatically set forth in some



of the inner rituals of the Christianized Gnosis. At any rate we definitely know that this was the case among the Marcosians, for Irenæus (I. xxi. 3), tells us :

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“Some of them prepare a Bridal Chamber and celebrate a mystery-rite with certain invocations on those who are being perfected ; and they declare that what is being solemnized by them is a Sacred Marriage, in likeness with the Unions Above.”

It has already been pointed out, in treating of that marvellously interesting early Christian Gnostic Ritual of Initiation known as *The Hymn of Jesus*, (p. 50), that “the ultimate end of the Gnosis was the at-one-ment or union of the little man with the Great Man, of the human soul with the Divine Soul” ; indeed, one of the chief keys to the interpretation of some of the most striking formulæ of this Ritual is that of the Sacred Marriage. It will not be out of place here to repeat

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one or two of these sentences. The neophyte impersonates the purified human soul or Sophia, and the Initiator or Master is the Christ.

“ I would be wounded.”

Or “ I would be pierced.” This suggests the entrance of the Ray, the Higher Self, into the Heart, whereby the “ Knot in the Heart,” as the Upanishads phrase it, may be unloosed, or dissolved, or in order that the purified Lower Self may receive the Divine Radiance of the Higher. This interpretation is borne out by the alternative reading from an old Latin translation, which may have originated in a gloss by one who knew the mystery, for he writes : “ I would be dissolved ” ; that is, “ consumed by love.”

And so we continue with the mysteries of this truly Sacred Marriage or Spiritual Union.

“ I would be begotten.”

This is the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception or Self-birth (pp, 57, 58).

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“ I would be adorned.’

The original Greek term suggests the idea of “ rightly ordered ” (*kosmein*). It may also mean “ clothed in fit garments ” ; that is, the soul prays that her little cosmos which has been previously out of order may be made like unto the Great Order, and so she may be clad in “ Glories ” or “ Robes of Glory,” or “ Power,” like unto the Great Glories of the Heavenly Spheres.

“ I would be at-oned.”

We now approach the Mystery of Union, when the soul abandons with joy its separateness, and frees itself from the limitations of its “ possessions ”—of that which is “ mine ” as apart from the rest (pp. 69, 70).

Enough has now been given to assure

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the reader that the Sacred Marriage was a fundamental mystery with the Christian Gnostics. We may next turn to the Trismegistic Gnosis.

IN THE TRISMEGISTIC GNOSIS.

Thus in the Sacred Sermon called "The Key," we read (§22) :

"Further there is an intercourse, or communion (*koinōia*), of souls ; those of the gods have intercourse with those of men, and those of men with souls of creatures which possess no reason.

"The higher, further, have in charge the lower ; the gods look after men, men after animals irrational, while God hath charge of all ; for He is higher than them all and all are less than He." (*H.* ii. 155, 173.)

Again in the Discourse called "The Secret Sermon on the Mountain," we read (§§1,2) :

“*Tat.* Wherefore I got me ready, and made the thought in me a stranger to the world-illusion.

“And now do thou fill up [suggesting the Plērōma] the things that fall short [suggesting the Hysterēma or Kenōma (*cf.* p. 55)] in me with what thou saidst would give one the tradition of Re-birth [or Regeneration], setting it forth in speech or as the secret way.

“I know not, O Thrice-greatest one, from out what matter and what womb Man [the Spiritual Man] comes to birth, or of what seed.

“*Hermes.* Wisdom that understands in Silence [such is the Matter and the Womb from out which Man is born], and the True Good the Seed.

“*Tat.* Who is the sower, father? For I am altogether at a loss.

“*Her.* It is the Will of God, my son.

“*Tat.* And of what kind is he who is begotten, father? For I have no share of that essence in me that doth transcend

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the senses. The one that is begot will be another one from God, God's Son?

"*Her.* All in all, out of all Powers composed. [*Cf.* the Christ as the Common Fruit of the Plērōma.]

"*Tat.* Thou tellest me a riddle, father, and dost not speak as father unto son.

"*Her.* This Race, my son, is never taught; but when He willeth it, its memory is restored by God." (*H.* ii. 220, 221, 240 f.)

This is the Mystery of the Virgin Birth.

IN THE CHALDÆAN ORACLES.

This Mystic Union was also the supreme mystery of the Hellenized Mago-Chaldæanism to which the first century mystery-poem known as the *Chaldæan Oracles* belonged, as we have shown in two of these little volumes. Thus speaking of the fragment which set forth "The End of Understanding" we wrote:

“The whole instruction might be termed a method of *yoga* or mystic union (*unio mystica*) of the spiritual or kingly mind, the mind that rules itself—*Rāja-yoga*, the Royal Art proper ” (i. 27 f.).

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And again (ii. 65): “Thus Proclus speaks of the soul, ‘according to a certain ineffable At-one-ment, leading that-which-is-filled [or the Kenōma] into sameness with that-which-fills [or the Plērōma], making one portion of itself, in an immaterial and impalpable fashion, a receptacle for the In-shining, and provoking the other to the Imparting of its Light.’ This, he says, is the meaning of the verse :  
“‘When the currents mingle in consummation of the Works of Deathless Fire.’ ”

Indeed the Pagan Mystics interpreted the Loves of the Gods in the only way it was possible to do so, namely, as Sacred Marriages, the Unions Above of the Marcosians (see p. 75 above): Thus

THE  
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WISDOM. Proclus, in his Commentary on Plato's  
*Parmenides* (ii. 214; Stallbaum—Leipzig,  
1841—p. 602), writes :

“The Theologers riddle these [Divine operations] by means of the Sacred Marriages; for without exception they call the like-natured combination and communion of the Divine Causes ‘Marriage’ in a mystic sense. Sometimes they see it in the co-ordinate [elements] and call it the Marriage of Hēra and Zeus, of Ouranos (Heaven) and Gē (Earth), of Kronos and Rhea; sometimes in the inferior (or deficient) with the superior, and call it the Marriage of Zeus and Dēmētēr; and again sometimes in the superior with the lower, and call it the Marriage of Zeus and Korē; since of the Gods some are communions with the co-ordinate [elements], others with those prior to these, and again others with those subsequent to them; and it is necessary to have a thorough understanding of the special character of each



[such union] and transfer such inter-twining from the Gods [or Wholes or Genera] to the species [individuals or partial existences].”

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The elements were considered as co-ordinates (*σύστοιχα*), that is, standing in the same row or order, or opposite (*ἀντίστοιχα*), that is, standing in opposite order or facing one another. Thus Air and Fire, Water and Earth, were regarded as co-ordinates, while Water and Fire, and Air and Earth, were considered opposites.

Indeed, we hear of a book entitled *What is Male and Female with the Gods, and what Marriage*, by Hipparchus the Stagirite (Lobeck, *Aglaophamus*—Königsberg, 1829—p. 608).

Many passages could be cited (Lobeck, *ibid.*, pp. 648 ff), but we may be content with two only.

Dio Chrysostom (xxxvi. 453), speaking of certain most sacred rites, says that :

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“The Sons of the Sages in the Perfect-  
ing Rites that must not be disclosed, sing  
of the Blessed Marriage of Hēra and  
Zeus.”

And Proclus again, in his Commentary  
on Plato's *Timæus* (i. 16), writes :

“That the same [Goddess] has union  
with different [Gods], and the same [God]  
with more [Goddesses], you may learn  
from the Mystic Discourses and what  
are called in the Mysteries the Sacred  
Marriages.”

IN THE MITHRIAC MYSTERIES. 1

In the mystery-traditions the stages  
of inner development which the human  
soul passes through in its transmutation  
from mortality to immortality, from man  
to God, were set forth as births (and  
deaths also, and risings from the dead),  
and marriages. It is, moreover, not  
difficult for the experienced mystic to

assure himself by the knowledge of his own "passion" that there must be marriage or union before birth. Therefore, though in dealing with the highly instructive Ritual which preserves for us perhaps the innermost rite or mystic sacrament of the Mithriaca (*A Mithriac Ritual*, Vol. VI.), we treated it as a whole from the standpoint of Rebirth or Regeneration, there is in each stage implicitly a union before the birth of new consciousness. This is implicit and not declared in this particular Ritual; the consummation, however, is declared. The Coming of the God is the descent of his Higher Self into the man and the taking up of the man into Him. The Higher and the Lower Self are at length united.

And so the last invocation prays :

" Oh Lord of me, abide with me within my Soul ! Oh ! leave me not ! "

Then comes the end ; even as on the Cross, the bitter cry : " My God, my

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God, why hast Thou forsaken me ? ”—  
and then, Death . . . and Triumph,  
Joy and Rebirth.

“ O Lord, being born again (or from Above), I pass away in-being-made-Great, and, having-been-made-Great, I die.

“ Being born from out the state of birth-and-death[Gk. *Genesis*, Sk. *Samsāra*], that giveth birth to mortal lives, I now, set free, pass to the state transcending birth, as Thou hast stablished it, according as Thou hast ordained and made the Mystery ” (p. 33).

This is achieved after the “ Doors ” of the Heavens are thrown open for the third time, Doors within and within, to the without and without, three stages of extended consciousness, or deeper realization.

Now it is to be remarked that just as in our Ode the Bride stands waiting for the Coming of the Bridegroom surrounded by Seven Bridesmaids and Seven Brides-

men, so in the Mithriac Ritual the rubric declares that the symbolic vision preceding the Coming of the God shall be characterized as follows :

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“Thou shalt behold the Doors thrown open, and issuing from the Depth, Seven Virgins. . . . These are they who are the so-called Heaven’s Fortunes. . .

“There come forth others, too—Seven Gods. . . . These are the so-called Heaven’s Pole-lords” (pp. 29, 30.)

It is enough to say that, mystically, the Ritual suggests the bringing into activity of seven twin-powers or sense-faculties in the new-born Perfect or Æonic Body, the Body of Wholeness, in which every sense is of the nature of wholeness, that is, this Body becomes all ear when it hears, all eye when it sees, and so forth.

But why Seven? The reader will of course reply: Because of the Seven Planets.

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THE SEVEN.

But both mysticism and the most recent scholarship forbid this facile answer. The so-called Planets, the Five and the Sun and Moon, were at a comparatively late date accommodated to the Seven, and were not its origin. The instructive treatise of Dr. Johannes Hehn, *Siebenzahl und Sabbat bei den Babyloniern und im Alten Testament: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Studie*, in the *Leipziger semitische Studien*, Bd. ii., Hft. v. (Leipzig, 1907), leaves no doubt on the subject.

VII., when translated by the Babylonians from the Sumerian, appears as: whole, totality, all=universum (pp. 4, 6, 52). This is Hehn's main contention, and he proves it in many ways. On p. 14 there is a hint that it means the Seven Directions [? of Space], but this suggestion he does not follow up. We will take up this point later on, for we know that *Dik* (in Sanskrit), the Directions of Space, is one of the chief categories of Indian philosophy.

VII., he says, is the expression of the highest Elevation, or Climax (compare the Stairway of the Neck of Wisdom in our Ode), of the highest Completion or Fulness (that is, Plērōma) and Power (p. 16).

Quoting from a text (p. 19), which speaks of "the Seven Limbs of the Father-house," he says, these naturally mean "all the Limbs" or Members. Compare this with the Pillars of our Ode, and the Pillars of the House of Wisdom in *Proverbs*.

Excellently, too, does he point out (p. 20), that in the Babylonian religion, "Nature, according to this view of the world, is not ruled over by dead Laws, but it is the out-working of living Personalities"—that is, Living Powers or Intelligences.

The VII., then, regarded as a Divine Power, "is not a Group of Gods, but is equivalent to the All-Godhead, and thus implies a comprehension of the whole pantheon" (p. 20).

Moreover, it is of interest to remark that  $2 \times 7$  often occurs, as in the phrase "the Seven Gods, the Twin-Gods," who are the Great Gods of Heaven and Earth (pp. 20, 23).

Also again in the invocations, both in high magic and in sorcery, the Twice-Seven occur: "Seven are they, Seven are they, Twice-Seven are they!" (pp. 28, 30, 34).

But what is the origin of this "sacred" number? The old theory of the planets, which has done service, without explaining anything, for so many centuries, must be abandoned, as Zimmern, Roscher, Schiarpelli and Wellhausen, among others, have pointed out in different lines of research (p. 44).

One thing is certain that the sacred character of the VII. goes back to very ancient times, to demonstrably pre-Babylonian days, for it is found as a commonplace in Sumerian culture (p. 46).

Moreover in Babylonian literature there are frequent groupings of stars (not



planets), according to the principle of the hebdomad (p. 47).

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Hehn, therefore, boldly declares that the cult of the planets was not *old* Babylonian, and reached its full development only in the Alexandrian period (p. 50).

It is true that the Planet-Gods were regarded in *later* Babylonian times as Patrons of the days of the week, but so also were other groups of Star-Gods, and the Planets were never specialized for this purpose. There was something more at the back of it all. What was it?

Hehn adopts Roscher's theory (p. 50), that the Seven has its origin in the quartering of the days of the month.

Just as the Sun-number was 6 or 60, factors of the 360 days of the year, not counting the odd days, so was the Moon-number 7, a fourth of 28, the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  days, to make the proper total  $29\frac{1}{2}$ , not counting. They dealt only with round numbers. The Moon was for the Babylonians the great time-measurer, the root of their calendar.

With this conclusion I would, with all due deference, venture to disagree. In this way *a* seven was found in natural phenomena, but was it the origin of *the* VII. If VII. was the Perfect Number in very ancient culture, as I think Hehn has proved, and as we shall see it can be shown along many other lines of research, then it is far more probable, in my opinion, that there was once a numbering by sevens, a system of notation where seven was the radix, just as we have in Babylon itself a duodecimal as well as a decimal system. But what lay at the back of this? Why was it that VII. completed the series; six, then seven, and then begin again?

Is it so wild a partial hypothesis (for I believe still far more was at the back of it), that VII. completed or perfected the physical or visible, that is, brought it into manifestation, that there must be 6 before there was any appearance here; that there must be the 6 directions complete, before anything could be seen;

take away one, and our space is not. A three-dimensional thing that has no top, or bottom, etc., is unthinkable in our space.

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As to "directions," therefore, there must be first a Within and a Without, and either of these must be measured by 3 dimensions, 3 pairs, making 6 directions in all (up, down, right, left, front, back), *plus* a monad or unity of the 3 or 6. Further, there was a 7 Within and a 7 Without, making in all 7 Twins, male and female, positive and negative, etc. True we have not yet got at the root of the matter, but it is not so difficult to see that here we have a 1 (monad), a 2 (dyad, twins), and a 3 (triad); and again the permutations and combinations of 3 things taken 1 at a time, 2 at a time, and 3 at a time, or all together, are 7,—*e.g.*, *a, b, c; ab, ac, bc; abc*—according to the formula,  $2^n - 1$ .

How enormously wide-spread was this category of VII. may be seen by turning to the index of Gerald Massey's two massive volumes, *Ancient Egypt: The*

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*Light of the World* (London, 1907), where the references to "seven" occupy two columns. The germ of his theory (p. 25) is that :

"The Ancient Genetrix [the World-Mother] was the Mother who brought forth Seven Children at a birth, or as a companionship, according to the category of phenomena. Her Seven Children were the Nature-Powers of all mythology. They are visibly represented under divers types because the Powers were reborn in different phenomena."

This theory he develops with endless illustrations, it is the vital side and complement of the directions-hypothesis that I have indicated ; it is the feminine completion of the masculine directions—the Virgins and the Pole-lords of the Mithriac Ritual.

**THE CHOIR OF THE ÆONS.**

But indeed every God, or Divine Power, in the Babylonian religion had a special

number, and the Number was the God ; and there is little doubt that Pythagoras derived his *mathesis* in the first place from initiation into the Babylonian mysteries.

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The Gods were Æons, or Eternities, and it is interesting to remark that one of the names for a God in the Babylonian language is Igig ; this is probably the origin of the term Iynx (Gk. Iygx, pl. Iygges) which was discussed at length in *The Chaldean Oracles* (ii. 9, ff.).

The whole of the Christian Gnostic æonology is based on such Numbers, as may be seen from the study "Some Outlines of Æonology," in *Fragments* (2nd. ed., pp. 311 ff.). But we have already over-run our space, and cannot treat of the 10 and 12, and total, 32 or 33, of the whole Plērōma or Dynamic Pantheon, the Modes of the Divine Mind, and Powers of the Divine Soul. The rest of our space must be given to a few necessary Notes.

## NOTES.

- 1 The Radiance, Splendour or Resplendence (Syr. *zīwā*, Gk. *apaúgasma*), is the Avestan *hvarcnō*, or Presence. (Cf. *A Mithriac Ritual*, p. 24.). It is the Light of the Kings, the Royal Pair, God and the Spirit, or the Sophia Above.
- 5 She, the Sophia Belōw, or in manifestation, is now pure Nature decked with spring flowers, Buddhi, the Ground of Enlightenment, or Spiritual Soul.
- 6 The "sweet-odour" is the "sweet savour" of the Holy Spirit, as Basilides calls it (*F.* p. 264).
- 7 The King is Ātman, the Highest Self; His Home is the Highest Heights, and He pours forth His Power into all the



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the Wall and Palisade in which is the inner man, fallen into it from the Primal Man the Adamas Above, or [the Stone] 'cut without hands' cutting it, and brought down into the plasm of forgetfulness, the earthy, clayey [plasm]." (*H.* i. 162).

This shows that the "teeth" were regarded as symbols of the Palisade, a term used of the Limit of the Æon-World in Gnostic tradition. For this symbolism, however, the number 30 (which is found as a variant reading), would perhaps be more appropriate, for the Emanation of the Limit that shut off the Æonic Immensities from the imperfect manifested world, in one of the most famous variants of the Sophia-mythus known to us, comes as a 31st, after the completion of 30 (*F.* pp. 342 ff.).

- 15 Perhaps instead of "those (τοῖς) who enter" we should rather read "priests (ἱεροῖς) who enter."



The Head represents the Holy City, 17  
the Jerusalem Above, and also the Temple,  
or Shrine of the God, that was on top of  
the "Stairway" in the ancient Baby-  
lonian truncated pyramids (the Mexican  
*teocallis*). They were pyramid-like  
buildings of six stages, of diminishing  
area, on the top of which was the shrine of  
the God. Here again we have our 6 and  
the monad ruling them.

The Æons were all paired, male-female 19  
in one, wholenesses; they were some-  
times figured as set over against one  
another in rows, like the choirs or choruses  
of men and women singers and dancers in  
the Therapeut communities (*F.* pp. 80 f.).  
But in reality they were all Wholenesses,  
Two-in-one, called by twin names, such  
as Mind-and-Truth, Word-and-Life, Man-  
and-Church; they were self-complemen-  
tary and self-sufficient. The manifested  
worlds of separation and opposition arose,  
according to one of the most striking  
Wisdom-myths (*F.* pp. 335 ff.), through

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Wisdom, the last of the *Æons*, separating herself from her Divine Complement, and so falling into the realm of the opposites.

- 21 The Decad of Fingers are the twice Five Great Limbs. Thus in yet another Hymn to Wisdom, in *The Acts of Thomas*, we read :

“Thou Mother of Compassion, come ;  
come Spouse of Him, the Man ; come  
Thou Revealer of the Mysteries concealed ;  
Thou Mother of the Seven Mansions  
come, who in the Eighth hath found Thy  
Rest !

“Come Thou who art the Messenger  
of the Five Holy Limbs — Mind,  
Thought, Reflection, Thinking, Reasoning ;  
commune with those of later birth ! ”

- 23 The City and the Bride-chamber are the same—the most secret place.

In the *Pistis Sophia* the City is a synonym of the Inheritance, it is in the

Midst of the highest Plērōma (*P.S.* pp. 52, 198), to it leads the Gate of Life (p. 292).

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From it, the Supernal Mouth, was born the Word of Prophecy, when the Secret Place was regarded as the within of the Head; and it must be remembered that the Gods were all regarded as Heads, Spheres, as for instance among the Trismegistic Mystics.

See the Sacred Sermon called "The Key" (§11):

"Since Cosmos is a sphere—that is to say, a head. . . .

"And head itself moved in a sphere-like way—that is to say, as head should move—is mind" (*H.* ii. 148).

The following Marcosian Ritual of the Sacrament of the Illumination of Prophecy (*Iren.* I. xiii. 3) is highly instructive in this connection. The Christ as Master addresses the Disciple:

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“ I would have thee share in My Grace [Glory, Power], since the Father of Wholes seeth thy Angel continually before His Face [that is, in His Presence].

“ Now the Place of thy Greatness [that is Angel] is in Us. We must be at-oned.

“ First receive from Me and through Me My Grace.

“ Make thyself ready as a Bride receiving her Bridegroom, in order that thou mayest be what I am, and I what thou art.

“ Dedicate in thy Bridal Chamber the Seed of Light.

“ Take from Me thy Bridegroom, and make way for Him, and be made way for in Him.

“ Lo ! Grace hath descended upon thee !

“ Open thy mouth and prophesy ! ”

- 37      The individual consummation of at-onement was of the same nature as the final consummation of the whole scheme of

salvation. Concerning this we may again turn to Irenæus (I. vii. 1), who sums up the Valentinian doctrine on this point as follows :

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“ Now when the whole [Spiritual] Seed [the Sons of God] has been perfected, they say that Achamōth [Hachmūth, Sophia], their Mother, passes from the Place of the Midst and enters within the Plērōma, and receives the Saviour as her Bridegroom, Him who is the Forthbringing of all [the Æons, *viz.*, the Common Fruit of the Plērōma], so that there is Union of the Saviour and Sophia, who is Achamōth.

“ And this is the Bridegroom and Bride, while the Bride-chamber is the whole Plērōma.

“ The Spiritual [Pneumatici, that is the Redeemed or Regenerate], moreover, stripping off their [animal or irrational] souls [*cf.* the ‘stripping off of the garments’ of the Naassene Document (p. 74 above)], and becoming gnostic spirits [or

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intelligences], entering the Plērōma, without the Opposing Powers being able to detain or see them, are restored back again as Brides to the Angels who surround the Saviour."

And again (*ibid.* 5) :

"The Spiritual [Seeds] after they have been deemed worthy of perfection are restored as Brides to the Angels of the Saviour . . . to enjoy bliss for ever."

- 40 The "Great Ones" (μεγιστᾶνες) might perhaps be translated "Grandeess," or "Satraps."
- 45 It is not quite clear what "both" refers to, unless to the company [Eg. *paut*] of the Bride, both male and female.
- 49 "Waste" mystically stands for "deficiency." Their food will henceforth be "Ambrosia," the "Food of Immortality," the Heavenly Manna, the Substance

of the Plērōma, or Fulness, as set over against the food of earth, the delights of the world, the deficiency. But the Gnostics were also ascetics and yogins, and knew of the mysteries of the body. Thus the Valentinians taught that the "free utterance," or perfect expression, of the Alone Good can only be manifested by the man made perfect. Such an one was Jesus. And so we find Valentinus writing to Agathopus (Clem. Alex. *Strom.* III. vii. 59) :

"It was by his unremitting self-denial in all things that Jesus digested divinity ; he ate and drank in a peculiar manner without any waste. The power of continence was so great in him, that his food did not decay in him, for he himself was without decay " (*F.* p. 302).

The "power" referred to by Valentinus is one of the *siddhis* (powers) mentioned in every treatise on *yoga*

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(mystic union) in India, and in the Upanishads we read that "very little waste" is one of the first signs of "success" in *hatha-yoga*, the physical discipline of the art.

As to the Living Food—in reference to the Miracle of the Loaves, the writer of the Fourth Gospel puts the following *logos* into the mouth of the Master (*Joh. vi. 27*) :

"Digest not the food that perisheth, but the food that abideth unto æonian life, which the Son of the Man shall give unto you, for on this hath the Father set His seal."

51 Burkitt, in his review of Preuschen, translates this line :

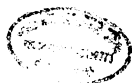
"Which is longed for and thirsted for by them who drink it."

We have already overstepped our space,



and so must conclude with the hope that what has been written may help some of our readers towards a better understanding of the "great" Mystery of the Sacred Marriage, and therewith to a more vital interpretation of "The Wedding-Song of Wisdom."

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בית הספרים הלאומי והאוניברסיטאי

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